

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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UNCLAS MEXICO 06993

PASS MINING ENFORCEMENT AND SAFETY ADMINISTRATION
FOR ROBERT E. BARRETT

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: EMIN, BENC, MX

SUBJECT: MEXICAN PLANS TO DEVELOP BAJA PHOSPHATE
DEPOSITS

1. SUMMARY. MINOFF MET WITH ING. LUIS DE LA PENA,
HEAD OF COMPANIA DE ROCA FOSFORICA MEXICANA S.A.
(REFOMEX) ON 5/6/77. DE LA PENA DISCUSSED THE
COMPANY'S PLANS TO DEVELOP EXTENSIVE PHOSPHATES FOUND
SEVERAL YEARS AGO IN BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR. END SUMMARY.

2. DEPOSITS OCCUR IN A 15 KILOMETER WIDE BELT STRETCH-
ING ACROSS THE PENINSULA AT ABOUT LATITUDE 24 DEGREES
50 MINUTES N BETWEEN LONGITUDE 111 DEGREES 30 MINUTES
AND LONGITUDE 112. PHOSPHATES OCCUR IN TWO STRATA IN
THE MONTERREY FORMATION AND MAY ALSO BE FOUND FURTHER
NORTH WHEN THAT AREA CAN BE EXPLORED.

3. THE UPPER STRATUM OR DEL RIOS VARIES FROM 1 TO 1.5
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METERS IN THICKNESS; THE LOWER HUMBOLT STRATUM RANGES
FROM 1.4 TO 2 METERS THICK. THE EASTERN AND CENTRAL
DEPOSITS ARE GENERALLY FOUND IN SEDIMENTARY ROCKS
BROKEN BY MANY ARROYOS. THE WESTERN COASTAL DEPOSITS
ARE IN A SANDY MIXTURE SIMILAR TO THE LEE CREEK, N.C.
DEPOSITS. P TWO O FIVE CONTENT RANGES BETWEEN 12 AND 20
AND AVERAGES 13.

4. ROFOMEX IS EXPERIMENTING WITH A VARIETY OF MINING METHODS TO DETERMINE THE MOST EFFECTIVE MEANS OF EXTRACTING THE ORE. WHERE OUTCROPPING OCCURS, CONVENTIONAL SURFACE MINING TECHNIQUES CAN BE EMPLOYED. SINCE OVERBURDEN RANGES UP TO 100 METERS, UNDERGROUND MINING TECHNIQUES ARE MORE ECONOMICAL IN PLACES. A 30 METER TUNNEL HAS BEEN STARTED AT ONE LOCATION AND ROFOMEX IS EXPERIMENTING WITH LONGWALL, SHORTWALL, ROOM AND PILLAR, AND OTHER METHODS USING MOSTLY U.S. EQUIPMENT, ALTHOUGH ONE AUSTRIAN MACHINE IS ALSO BEING EMPLOYED. AT A LATER DATE, ROFOMEX PLANS TO SEND SOME OF ITS ENGINEERS TO THE BUMINES PITTSBURG COAL RESEARCH CENTER TO STUDY TECHNIQUES DEVELOPED THERE. AS YET, NO ROOF BOLTING IS BEING DONE.

5. DE LA PENA SHOWED MINOFF A NUMBER OF TABLES GIVING THE RESULTS OF TESTS RUN ON BENEFICIATING THE ORE. USING A VARIETY OF SOLVENTS AND FRESH, BRACKISH, AND SALT WATER. P TWO O 5 CONTENT WAS RAISED TO 28 TO 33 WITH RECOVERY RATES ON FLOATATION OF 95 TO 98. OVERALL RECOVERY RATES WERE 85 BY VOLUME OR 50 TO 60 BY WEIGHT. PERCENTAGES OF CALCIUM OXIDE, IRON, ALUMINA, AND MAGNESIUM WERE NEARLY IDENTICAL TO THOSE FOUND IN FLORIDA PHOSPHATIC ROCK WITH SIMILAR BONE PHOSPHATE LIME LEVELS. LARGE QUANTITIES OF FRESH WATER ARE AVAILABLE FROM WELLS ABOUT 25 KM AWAY. TAILINGS DISPOSAL IS NO PROBLEM SINCE THE AREA IS VIRTUALLY UNINHABITED AND ANY NUMBER OF CONVENIENT ARROYOS CAN BE USED.

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6. BECAUSE OF THE TIME IT WILL TAKE TO DEVELOP THE NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE, DE LA PENA DOES NOT EXPECT TO HAVE A PLANT IN OPERATION UNTIL THE BEGINNING OF 1979. HE PLANS TO OPERATE A 3000 TON/DAY THROUGHPUT PLANT FOR APPROXIMATELY TWO YEARS, TO DEMONSTRATE ITS FEASIBILITY BEFORE MOVING TO A COMMERCIAL OPERATION CAPABLE OF PRODUCING 1 TO 1.5 MILLION TONS/YEAR OF ENRICHED PHOSPHATES.

7. ROFOMEX WILL MARKET ITS PRODUCT AT WORLD PRICES TO MEXICAN AND FOREIGN PURCHASERS. IF THE GOM CHOOSES TO SUBSIDIZE FERTILIZER PRICES, THE ADJUSTMENTS WILL BE MADE FURTHER DOWNSTREAM.

8. DE LA PENA WANTS TO SEND SOME OF HIS ENGINEERS TO THE BUMINES BUFFALO RESEARCH CENTER AND TO OTHER APPROPRIATE FACILITIES IN THE FALL OF 1977 AFTER THEY HAVE SUFFICIENT INFORMATION ON THE METALLURGY OF THE ORES AND THE MINING PROBLEMS THEY MAY ENCOUNTER. THEY WOULD

ALSO APPRECIATE A VISIT BY BARRETT IF HE IS ABLE TO
ATTEND THE SEVENTH ANNUAL MINING CONVENTION IN OCTOBER.
THOMPSON

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
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Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
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